Testimonies of Jewish Converts To Islam
Introduction

Thousands of Jews convert to Islam, from Rabbis to reform Jews, as well as Jews for Jesus, each after research, study and comparison, discover the Truth and Beauty of Islam and how Islam completes our lives, fills our spirits, and brings us closer to God and on the path of Righteousness.

Included here are the testimonies of a few of our fellow Jewish brothers and sisters who have accepted Islam as their religion, Allah as their God, and Muhammad as the final Prophet, ameen.

(1) WHOMEVER HEARS, ANSWER!

Rashida S. (Rachel Singer - USA)

I came to Islam late, a daughter of a devout Roman Catholic mother/very devout Jewish father. By age 4 I knew of Allah and in 1991 I traveled to Egypt to read some of my writing. I had already spent almost 20 years among the most pious of Jews, had married, had children. When I heard the muezzin* before Fajr* his voice was like the arrow one dreams that a lover will shoot into the heart, it cut & held me unable to speak. Not even knowing Arabic, I knew the sound, it is like a recognition of something so profound, so great and if I may say, so sweet that one has been searching for. The Quran speaks to me clearly as if it was written for Jews to hear and wake up. I had to leave the community I lived in and my children. I did not chose to, I had to. Those of you, young and coming into Islam are truly blessed. You have your lives, will marry and raise Muslim children in'shallah.

The only people who can say they are Chosen, are those who search for the True path to Allah with all their heart.

* Muezzin: A person who calls for prayers in the mosque. The AZAN is the call. It usually occurs 5 times a day. The AZAN's context is the following: Allah is greater...I witness that there is no god but ALLAH. And I witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to the prayer.. come to success...Allah is greater...

* Fajr: Dawn.

(2) Rabbi of Makhachkala Synagogue embraced Islam



Every person has a different way of coming to the Truth. For Moisha Krivitsky this way led through a faculty of law, a synagogue and a prison.

The lawyer-to-be becomes a Rabbi, then he converts into Islam and finds himself in prison. Today Musa (this is the name he has adopted when he became a Muslim) lives in a small mosque in Al-Burikent, a mountain area of Makhachkala, and works as a watchman in the Central Juma mosque.

- Musa, before we began talking, you asked what we were going to talk about. I said: 'About you.' 'What's so interesting about me?' you wondered. 'I live in the mosque'. How did you come to live in the mosque?

- Well, I just dropped in... and stayed.

- Did you find the way easily?

- With great difficulty. It was hard then, and it isn't much easier now. When you go deeply into Islam's inner meaning, you understand that this religion is very simple, but the way that leads to it may be extremely difficult. Often, people don't understand how a person could be converted into Islam 'from the other side', as it were. But there are no 'sides' here: Islam is everything there is, both what we imagine and what we don't imagine.

- Musa, as a matter of fact, we were given this fact as a certain sensation: a Rabbi has turned Muslim.

- Well, it has been no sensation for quite a long while already - it's more than a year that I did this. It was strange for me at first, too. But it wasn't an off-the-cuff decision. When I came into Islam, I had read books about it, I had been interested.

- Did you finish any high school before coming to the synagogue?

- Yes, I finished a clerical high school. After graduation, I came to Makhachkala, and became the local Rabbi.

- And where did you come from?

- Oh, from far away. But I've already become a true Daghestani, I've got a lot of friends here - both among Muslims and people who are far from Islam.

- Let's return to your work in the synagogue.

- It was quite a paradoxical situation: there was a mosque near my synagogue, the town mosque. Sometimes my fiends who were its parishioners would come to me - just to chat. I sometimes would come to the mosque myself, to see how the services were carried out. I was very interested. So we lived like good neighbours. And once, during Ramadan, a woman came to me - as I now understand, she belonged to a people that was historically Muslim - and she asked me to comment the Russian translation of the Qur'an made by Krachkovsky.

- She brought the Qur'an to you - a Rabbi?!

- Yes, and she asked me to give her the Torah to read in return. So I tried to read the Qur'an - about ten times. It was really hard, but gradually I began to understand, and to get a basic notion of Islam. *(Here, Musa looked at my friend's son, the six-year old Ahmed, who had fallen asleep in the mosque courtyard. "Should we probably take him inside the mosque?", asked Musa.)* And that woman had brought back the Torah. It turned out to be very difficult for her to read and understand it, because religious literature requires extreme concentration and attention.

- Musa, and when you were reading the translation, you must have begun to compare it with the Torah?

- I had found answers to many questions in the Qur'an. Not to all of them, of course, because it wasn't the Arabic original, but the translation. But I had begun to understand things.

- Does it mean that you couldn't find some answers in Judaism?

- I don't know, there's Allah's will in everything. Apparently, those Jews who became Muslims in the times of the Prophet (let Allah bless and greet him), couldn't find some answers in Judaism, but found them in Islam. Perhaps, they were attracted by the personality of the Prophet (let Allah bless him!), his behaviour, his way of communicating with people. It's an important topic.

- And what exactly were the questions that you couldn't find answers to in Judaism?

- Before I came into contact with Islam, there were questions which I had never even tried to find answers to. Probably, an important part here had

been played by a book written by Ahmad Didat, a South African scholar, comparing the Qur'an and the Bible. There is a key phrase, well-known to those who are familiar with religious issues: “Follow the Prophet who is yet to come”. And when I studied Islam, I understood that the Prophet Muhammad (let Allah bless him!) is the very Prophet to be followed. Both the Bible and the Torah tell us to do it. I haven’t invented anything here.

- And what does the Torah say about the Prophet (let Allah bless him!)?

- We won’t be able to find this name in the Torah. But we can figure it out using a special key. For example, we can understand what god this or that particular person in history worships. The formula describing the last Prophet (let Allah bless and greet him) is that he would worship One God, the Sole Creator of the world. The Prophet Muhammad (let Allah bless him!) matches this description exactly. When I read this, I got very interested. I hadn’t known anything about Islam before that. Then I decided to look deeper into the matter and see whether there were any miracles and signs connected with the name of the Prophet (let Allah bless him!). The Bible tells us that the Lord sends miracles to the prophets to confirm their special mission in people’s eyes. I asked the alims about this, and they said: “Here’s a collection of true hadiths which describe the miracles connected with the Prophet (let Allah bless him!)”.

Then I read that the Prophet (let Allah bless him) had always said that there had been prophets and messengers before him (let Allah be content with them). We can find their names both in the Torah and in the Bible. When I was only starting to get interested, it sounded somewhat strange for me. And then... Well, my own actions led to what happened to me. Sometimes I get to thinking: why did I read all this? Perhaps, I should say the tauba *(a prayer of repenting)* right now for having thoughts like that.

- Should I understand you, Musa, that you now feel a great responsibility for becoming a Muslim, or do you have some other feelings?

- Yes, responsibility, but something else as well. I can’t put my finger on it now. When a person knows Islam well, he’s got both his feet firmly on the ground. Islam helps a person understand who he is, where he comes from, what he is there for.

I would be insincere if I said that the all the Daghestani are such ‘knowing’ Muslims. We sometimes talk about it in the mosque and I like to say that there are not so many real Muslims in Daghestan - only the ustaths *(learned theologians)* and their students, and the rest of us are just candidates. I can’t say that we do what the sunna requires, we’re only trying to. And when we don’t do what we should, we’re trying to invent some clever excuses. These efforts should have better been applied to doing our duty. It’s hard for me to watch this. Sometimes, I’m distracted by what is happening around me, as well. I haven’t got strength enough to fight this, and the weakness of my nature shows clearly here. I can’t say I’m totally helpless, but I have no right to say that I’ve achieved anything in Islam. I’ve only got torments.

When I understood that I had to become a Muslim, I thought that Islam was a single whole - one common road, or a huge indivisible ocean. Then I saw that there were a lot of trends in Islam, and new questions appeared. All these trends are like whirlpools, they whirl and whirl... it’s very hard! If a person tells you: “Look, we fulfil all the hadiths, only *we* understand åðó Qur'an correctly”, then you follow this person, because you think that he speaks true things, and because you want to please Allah. But then, after a couple of months, you understand that these claims were false. Allah controls us. And you think: if this way is the right way, then why is there something that goes the wrong way?..

- **Musa, and what brought you into the prison?**

- A good question, this, isn’t it?

- **Who welcomed you there?**

- If there’s Allah’s will to everything, then this was His will as well. Regarding life from behind the barbed wire, going through all of this, that was a certain school for me.

- **How did it happen?**

- I’ve recently seen a programme on the TV, and a representative of the Chechen republic in Moscow - I forget his name now, I believe he had some beautiful, French-sounding name, something like Binaud - he said that if the authorities were going to carry on like they had done before - barging into homes, planting drugs and weapons on people - then the people would be

out in the streets protesting. This has happened to many here. So there was something planted on me. Then they came and took me away at night.

Before that, I had had a certain notion about he forces of the law here... well, I couldn't think they would use such, well, not very polite methods. Islam doesn't let me use a stronger word. Allah estimates what every man does, and those people will have to answer for what they have done.

But the three months I spent in prison, they probably helped me to make my faith stronger. I saw how people behaved under the extreme circumstances, both Muslims and non-Muslims, how I behaved.

It would be good, of course, if the people in power would pay their attention to this problem. They shouldn't be trying to eradicate Islam with such unsavoury methods.

- **Musa, why were the authorities frightened by you?**

- No idea. Even children aren't afraid of me.

At this moment, our conversation was interrupted by a stunningly beautiful azan.

- **Is there a muezzin in your mosque?**

- Yes, his name is Muamat Tarif, it was him that we've just heard.

- **And there's only you and him who works in this mosque?**

- Well, as a matter of fact, only he works. He allows me... I still can't get used to things after prison. He allows me to live here. It's hard to recall this. I had a certain trouble with the people whose flat I was living in, the understanding between us somehow failed. I started perceiving them in a different way. But it's probably bad to be looking for other people's drawbacks, I've probably got more.

People started arriving to the mosque. We rose and hastened for the prayer, too.

(3) Hajj Mustafa Ali (David Sterling)

American Muslim, born of Jewish heritage, who has been devoted to the discovery of unity for over three decades. He was born in New York and raised from the age of 10 in Los Angeles, California. From the early age of 13, he was caught by yearning for divine realization and spent time with many spiritual teachers of different paths such as the Fourth Way, Zen Buddhism and the esoteric aspects of both Christianity and Judaism. He was taught by illustrious personalities from the Vajrayanna and Tibetan schools of Buddhism such as Kalu Rinpoche, and Lama Kunga. He also had instruction from the late Swami Muktananda.

In the late 70s he met Murshid Hassan al-Moumani a Sufi Shaykh from the West Bank in Palestine. Murshid Hassan conferred spiritual permission upon him in the Sufi path of the Rafa‘i order which led Hajj Mustafa Ali to embrace Islam. In the following few years, he became a student (Mureed) of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri and has since remained under his guidance and instruction.

Hajj Mustafa Ali has traveled throughout the world in search of truth and lived abroad, teaching and heading communities of seekers in Canada, America, Pakistan, and South Africa. His experiences with realized beings of the age are truly remarkable. In addition to apprenticing under several Sufi shaykhs, he has taken instruction and blessings (baraka) from over a dozen other realized masters.

Currently residing in Houston, Texas, USA, Hajj Mustafa Ali is the designated representative (Wakeel) of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri in the United States. His primary mission is to call people to “Original Islam”, the way of reality. At present he is holding regular gatherings of “dhikr” and instruction in the art of the Way. He is also engaged in writing and publishing books regarding the Sufi way of realization. Here is brother Mustaf's website: http://www.nuradeen.com

(4) WHY I EMBRACED ISLAM

Finding solace in the Garden of Peace by Suleyman Ahmad
I am an American journalist and author. In 1997, aged 49, after more than 30 years of research study, and life experience, I came into Islam. This decision reflected many issues in my life.

I grew up in an environment that would be extremely strange for most Americans. My father was Jewish; my mother was the daughter of a famous Protestant fundamental minister. My father was a religious student, or Yeshiva-bocher, as a youth. My mother was raised in an atmosphere of intensive Bible reading, and she knew the Old and New Testaments very well.

In Sarajevo, I did not find myself to be a tourist. I had direct encounters with Muslim believers and scholars

Both my parents faith was tested by the events of the 1930s. My mother abandoned Christianity in protest against the Nazi attacks on the Jews, who she had been raised to view as the original People of God. Later, she converted to Judaism.

Both my parents spent a long period under the influence of the Communist Party, even as they continued to believe in the Jewish faith. That was the tragic paradox of their lives; disappointed by the failures of their born religions. However, while they wavered between liberal-radicalism and God, they were never extreme about Zionism.

Indeed, I always felt pain at the conflict in the Middle East, and always yearned for justice and friendship between Israelis and Arabs.
I was an extreme radical leftist as a youth. However, I also wrote poetry, and even though discouraged from it by my parents confusion and bitterness about religion, I believed in God. I tried to sort these matters out.

I believe the most important contributions that will be made by Islam in America involve racial justice and public morality

My first search for the truth led me to the Catholic church. Although I did not convert, I was deeply impressed by Catholic mystical literature.
Very early on, I learned that behind the glorious works of the Spanish Catholic mystics there was the history of Islam in Spain, and that a beautiful Islamic inspiration had survived in that tradition. I eventually travelled to Spain repeatedly, searching out the traces of the long Islamic residence in the Iberian peninsula. As a writer, I researched this phenomenon over many years. I studied the troubadour poets, who showed a deep Islamic influence.

Beginning in 1979, I studied Kabbalah, the tradition of Jewish mysticism. There too, I found an immense Islamic reflection, filtered through Judaism. However, the decisive event in my journey to Islam came in 1990 when I began travelling to the Balkans as a journalist. I visited Sarajevo, and reported on the Bosnian war.

In Sarajevo, I discovered some amazing things. I found an outpost of Islam in Europe, in an environment where I did not feel I was a tourist, where I could have simple and direct encounters with Muslim believers and scholars. I found beautiful poetry and music that expressed the values of Islamic grace and love.

I had discovered the garden of the old Imam; to quote a line from a famous Bosnian song- the remnant of the great period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, and its tremendous contributions to Islamic civilization.

I read passages from the Quran and visited Islamic monuments on my trips to the Balkans. I kept coming back to the garden, and finally I entered it. Since accepting Islam, I have proceeded carefully in informing my friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others. I do not want to provoke conflict or controversy, and I do not want this experience to be seen as something superficial or faddish. It isn’t about me, it’s about Allah. I want to proceed in a way that will do the most for the welfare of the Ummah and for better relations between all believers in la ilaha illallah.

So far, I have had no problems aside from occasional crude remarks. If anything, people in my newsroom seem pleased to have someone around who can report with greater accuracy about issues. Others are surprised but respectful; they seem to understand this is not about politics or publicity-seeking, but reflects a long personal quest.

I think also, to be totally honest, that non-Muslims see me as someone deeply affected by my experience in the Balkans, so that this choice makes some sense in that context.

However, I am quick to make clear that I am not a Muslim for political or humanitarian reasons, but because the message of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is the clearest evidence of the wishes of Allah.

As I stated at the beginning, I see much of what is positive in Judaism and Christianity today as a reflection of Islamic influence.

I mentioned Spanish Catholicism. There is a reason Spanish Catholics feel their faith more intensely than other Catholics, and that is because of the Islamic legacy in their culture. The Crusades and the Inquisition did not extinguish this light, however dimmed it may seem to some.

I truly believe that without the tolerance of the Arab rulers in Spain, and, particularly, the generous protection extended by the Ottoman caliphs, Judaism might have disappeared from the world. Certainly, Jewish religious historians today admit that Judaism today would be very different without the positive input derived from living in a Muslim environment.

The aspect of Islam that most impressed me is the emphasis on inner peace afforded by submission to the will of Allah. I saw this in the politeness, the courtesy, the simplicity and sincerity (ikhlas) of Bosnian Muslims who had been through the worst torments, yet never gave up their basic serenity. That serenity has made my life easier. Whenever I feel troubled and tested by daily life, or anxious and fearful about the future, or frustrated in my literary ambitions, my mind goes automatically, now, to remembrance of the Muslims I know in Bosnia, to the calm and unity of congregational prayers, and, above all, to the clean and soothing words of the Quran.

My only problem has been in overcoming my fears about conflict with Jews and Christians. I seek conciliation-though not concessions to secularism.
I believe the most important contributions that will be made by Islam in America involve racial justice and public morality. We all recognize the truth of Brother Malcolm’s declaration that the solution to America’s racial problem is Islam. I think that Islam also offers the solution to America’s moral problem.

Before I became a Muslim, I was impressed by the values of Muslims I knew in America and the moral strength of the Balkan Muslims in the face of their ordeal. Today, I am, I must say, somewhat sad to find that the Ummah is so profoundly divided, and to see how Muslims quarrel with each other. I am also concerned by the failure of Muslims to do more for the victims of Orthodox Christian imperialism in the Balkans. Islam has brought great peace and beauty to my life. As I have told others, the remainder of my

years will be dedicated to service of Allah. I have personally pledged to do all I can to help rebuild the mosque of Bosnia and Kosova.

(5) Why I chose Islam, by Jemima Goldsmith

When Jemima Goldsmith, the 21-year-old daughter of billionaire Sir James, married Imran Khan she embraced not only the world's most handsome sportsman but also the Muslim faith, taking the name Haiqa. Here, in an exclusive account, she tells how she journeyed from the glamorous society of London to the austere religion of Lahore

By Jemima Goldsmith

THE media present me as a naive, besotted 21-year-old who has made a hasty decision without really considering the consequences - thus effectively condemning herself to a life of interminable subservience, misery and isolation. Although I must confess I have rather enjoyed the various depictions of a veiled and miserable "Haiqa Khan" incarcerated in chains, the reality is somewhat different. Contrary to current opinion, my decision to convert to Islam was entirely my own choice and in no way hurried. Whilst the act of conversion itself is surprisingly quick - entailing the simple assertion that "there is only one God and Mohammed is His Prophet" - the preparation is not necessarily so speedy a process. In my case, this began last July, whilst the actual conversion took place in early February - three months before the Nikkah in Paris.

During that time, I studied in depth both the Quran and the works of various Islamic scholars (Gai Eaton, the Bosnian president Alia Izetbegovic, Muhammad Asad) , thus giving me ample time to reflect before making my decision. What began as intellectual curiosity slowly ripened into a dawning realisation of the universal and eternal truth that is Islam. In the statement given out a week ago, I particularly stressed that I had converted to Islam entirely "through my own convictions".

The significance of this has been largely ignored by the press. The point is that my conversion was not, as so many have assumed, a pre-requisite to my marriage. It was entirely my own choice. Religiously speaking, there was absolutely no compulsion for me to convert prior to my marriage. As it explicitly states in the Quran, a Muslim is permitted to marry from "the People of the Book" - in other words, either a Christian or a Jew. Indeed, the

Sunnah - which describes the life of the Prophet - shows that the messenger of Islam hi mself married both a Christian and a Jew during his lifetime.

I believe that much of this hostility towards my marriage and conversion stems from widespread misconceptions about an alien culture and religion. Not only is there a huge gulf between the Western view of Islam and the reality, but there is in some cases also a significant distinction between Islam based directly on the Quran and the Sunnah and that practised by some Islamic societies. During the last year I have had the opportunity to visit Pakistan on three separate occasions and have observed Islamic family life in practice.

Thus, to some extent I now feel qualified to judge for myself the true role and position of women in the religion. At the risk of sounding defensive, I would like to point out that Islam is not a religion which subjugates women whilst elevating men to the status of mini-dictators in their own homes.
I was able to see this first-hand when I met Imran's sisters in Lahore: they are all highly educated professional women. His oldest sister, Robina, is an alumnus of the LSE and holds a senior position in the United Nations in New York.

Another sister, Aleema, has a master's degree in business administration and runs a successful business; Uzma is a highly qualified surgeon working in a Lahore hospital, whilst Rani is a university graduate who co-ordinates charity work. They can hardly be seen as "women in chains" dominated by tyrannical husbands. On the contrary, they are strong-minded independent women - yet at the same time they remain deeply committed both to their families and their religion. Thus, I was able to see - in theory and in practice - how Islam promotes the essential notion of the family unit without subjugating its female members.

I am nevertheless fully aware that women are sometimes exploited and oppressed in Islamic societies, as in other parts of the world. Judging by some of the articles which have appeared in the press, it would seem that a Western woman's happiness hinges largely upon her access to nightclubs, alcohol and revealing clothes; and the absence of such apparent freedom and luxuries in Islamic societies is seen as an infringement of her basic rights.

However, as we all know, such superficialities have very little to do with true happiness. Besides, without in any way wishing to disparage the culture

of the Western world, into which I was born, I am more than willing to forego the transient pleasures derived from alcohol and nightclubs; and as for the clothes I will be wearing, I find the traditional shalwar kameez (tunic and trousers) worn by most Pakistani women far more elegant and feminine than anything in my wardrobe.

Finally, it seems futile to speculate on my chances of marital success. Marriage, as Imran's father has been quoted as saying, is indeed "a gamble". However, when I see that in a society based on family life the divorce rate is just a fraction of that in European or American society, I cannot see that my chances of success are any less than if I had chosen to marry a Westerner. I am all too aware of the enormous task of adapting to a new and radically different culture.

But with the love of my husband and the support of his family I look forward to the challenge wholeheartedly, and would like to feel that people wish me well. Whilst I do appreciate the genuine concerns of many, I must confess to feeling somewhat bewildered by all of the commotion.

(6) Interview with Maryam Jameelah

Q: Would you kindly tell us how your interest in Islam began?

A: I was Margaret (Peggy) Marcus. As a small child I possessed a keen interest in music and was particularly fond of the classical operas and symphonies considered high culture in the West. Music was my favorite subject in school in which I always earned the highest grades. By sheer chance, I happened to hear Arabic music over the radio which so much pleased me that I was determined to hear more.

I would not leave my parents in peace until my father finally took me to the Syrian section in New York City where I bought a stack of Arabic recordings. My parents, relatives and neighbors thought Arabic and its music dreadfully weird and so distressing to their ears that whenever I put on my recordings, they demanded that I close all the doors and windows in my room lest they be disturbed! After I embraced Islam in 1961, I used to sit enthralled by the hour at the mosque in New York, listening to tape-recordings of Tilawat chanted by the celebrated Egyptian Qari, Abdul Basit. But on Jumha Salat (Friday Prayers), the Imam did not play the tapes.

We had a special guest that day. A short, very thin and poorly-dressed black youth, who introduced himself to us as a student from Zanzibar, recited Surah ar-Rahman. I never heard such glorious Tilawat even from Abdul Basit! He possessed such a voice of gold; surely Hazrat Bilal must have sounded much like him!

I traced the beginning of my interest in Islam to the age of ten. While attending a reformed Jewish Sunday school, I became fascinated with the historical relationship between the Jews and the Arabs. From my Jewish textbooks, I learned that Abraham was the father of the Arabs as well as the Jews. I read how centuries later when, in medieval Europe, Christian persecution made their lives intolerable, the Jews were welcomed in Muslim Spain and that it was the magnanimity of this same Arabic Islamic civilization which stimulated Hebrew culture to reach its highest peak of achievement.

Totally unaware of the true nature of Zionism, I naively thought that the Jews were returning to Palestine to strengthen their close ties of kinship in religion and culture with their Semitic cousins. Together I believed that the Jews and the Arabs would cooperate to attain another Golden Age of culture in the Middle East.

Despite my fascination with the study of Jewish history, I was extremely unhappy at the Sunday school. At this time I identified myself strongly with the Jewish people in Europe, then suffering a horrible fate under the Nazis and I was shocked that none of my fellow classmates nor their parents took their religion seriously During the services at the synagogue, the children used to read comic strips hidden in their prayer books and laugh to scorn at the rituals.

The children were so noisy and disorderly that the teachers could not discipline them and found it very difficult to conduct the classes.
At home the atmosphere for religious observance was scarcely more congenial. My elder sister detested the Sunday school so much that my mother literally had to drag her out of bed in the mornings and it never went without the struggle of tears and hot words.

Finally my parents were exhausted and let her quit. On the Jewish High Holy Days instead of attending synagogue and fasting on Yom Kippur, my sister and I were taken out of school to attend family picnics and parties in

fine restaurants. When my sister and I convinced our parents how miserable we both were at the Sunday school they joined an agnostic, humanist organization known as the Ethical Culture Movement.

The Ethical Culture Movement was founded late in the 19th century by Felix Alder. While studying for rabbinate, Felix Alder grew convinced that devotion to ethical values as relative and man-made, regarding any supernaturalism or theology as irrelevant, constituted the only religion fit for the modern world. I attended the Ethical Culture Sunday School each week from the age of eleven until I graduated at fifteen. Here I grew into complete accord with the ideas of the movement and regarded all traditional, organized religions with scorn.

When I was eighteen years old I became a member of the local Zionist youth movement known as the Mizrachi Hatzair. But when I found out what the nature of Zionism was, which made the hostility between Jews and Arabs irreconcilable, I left several months later in disgust. When I was twenty and a student at New York University, one of my elective courses was entitled Judaism in Islam. My professor, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Katsh, the head of the department of Hebrew Studies there, spared no efforts to convince his students--all Jews, many of whom aspired to become rabbis--that Islam was derived from Judaism.

Our textbook, written by him, took each verse from the Quran, painstakingly tracing it to its allegedly Jewish source. Although his real aim was to prove to his students the superiority of Judaism over Islam, he convinced me diametrically of the opposite.

I soon discovered that Zionism was merely a combination of the racist, tribalistic aspects of Judaism. Modern secular nationalistic Zionism was further discredited in my eyes when I learned that few, if any, of the leaders of Zionism were observant Jews and that perhaps nowhere is Orthodox, traditional Judaism regarded with such intense contempt as in Israel.

When I found nearly all important Jewish leaders in America supporters for Zionism, who felt not the slightest twinge of conscience because of the terrible injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian Arabs, I could no longer consider myself a Jew at heart.

One morning in November 1954, Professor Katsh, during his lecture, argued with irrefutable logic that the monotheism taught by Moses (peace be upon him) and the Divine Laws reveled to him were indispensable as the basis for all higher ethical values. If morals were purely man-made, as the Ethical Culture and other agnostic and atheistic philosophies taught, then they could be changed at will, according to mere whim, convenience or circumstance. The result would be utter chaos leading to individual and collective ruin.

Belief in the Hereafter, as the Rabbis in the Talmud taught, argued Professor Katsh, was not mere wishful thinking but a moral necessity. Only those, he said, who firmly believed that each of us will be summoned by God on Judgement Day to render a complete account of our life on earth and rewarded or punished accordingly, will possess the self-discipline to sacrifice transitory pleasure and endure hardships and sacrifice to attain lasting good.

It was in Professor Katsh's class that I met Zenita, the most unusual and fascinating girl I have ever met. The first time I entered Professor Katsh's class, as I looked around the room for an empty desk in which to sit, I spied two empty seats, on the arm of one, three big beautifully bound volumes of Yusuf Ali's English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran.

I sat down right there, burning with curiosity to find out to whom these volumes belonged. Just before Rabbi Katsh's lecture was to begin, a tall, very slim girl with pale complexion framed by thick auburn hair, sat next to me. Her appearance was so distinctive, I thought she must be a foreign student from Turkey, Syria or some other Near Eastern country.

Most of the other students were young men wearing the black cap of Orthodox Jewry, who wanted to become rabbis. We two were the only girls in the class. As we were leaving the library late that afternoon, she introduced herself to me. Born into an Orthodox Jewish family, her parents had migrate
d to America from Russia only a few years prior to the October Revolution in 1917 to escape persecution.

I noted that my new friend spoke English with the precise care of a foreigner. She confirmed these speculations, telling me that since her family and their friends speak only Yiddish among themselves, she did not learn any English until after attending public school. She told me that her name

was Zenita Liebermann but recently, in an attempt to Americanize themselves, her parents had changed their name from "Liebermann" to "Lane."

Besides being thoroughly instructed in Hebrew by her father while growing up and also in school, she said she was now spending all her spare time studying Arabic. However, with no previous warning, Zenita dropped out of class and although I continued to attend all of his lectures to the conclusion of the course, Zenita never returned.

Months passed and I had almost forgotten about Zenita when suddenly she called and begged me to meet her at the Metropolitan Museum and go with he r to look at the special exhibition of exquisite Arabic calligraphy and ancient illuminated manuscripts of the Quran. During our tour of the museum, Zenita told me how she had embraced Islam with two of her Palestinian friends as witnesses.

I inquired, "Why did you decide to become a Muslim?" She then told me that she had left Professor Katsh's class when she fell ill with a severe kidney infection Her condition was so critical, she told me, her mother and father had not expected her to survive. "One afternoon while burning with fever, I reached for my Holy Quran on the table beside by bed and began to read and while I recited the verses, it touched me so deeply that I began to weep and then I knew I would recover.

As soon as I was strong enough to leave my bed, I summoned two of my Muslim friends and took the oath of the "Shahadah" or Confession of Faith" Zenita and I would eat our meals in Syrian restaurants where I acquired a keen taste for this tasty cooking. When we had money to spend, we would order Couscous, roast lamb with rice or a whole soup plate of delicious little meatballs swimming in gravy scooped up with loaves of unleavened Arabic bread. And when we had little to spend, we would eat lentils and rice, Arabic style, or the Egyptian national dish of black broad beans with plenty of garlic and onions called "Ful"

While Professor Katsh was lecturing thus, I was comparing in my mind what I had read in the Old Testament and the Talmud with what was taught in the Quran and Hadith and finding Judaism so defective, I was converted to Islam.

Q: Were you scared that you might not be accepted by the Muslims?

A: My increasing sympathy for Islam and Islamic ideals enraged the other Jews I knew, who regarded me as having betrayed them in the worst possible way. They used to tell me that such a reputation could only result from shame of my ancestral heritage and an intense hatred for my people. They warned me that even if I tried to become a Muslim, I would never be accepted. These fears proved totally unfounded as I have never been stigmatized by any Muslim because of my Jewish origin. As soon as I became a Muslim myself, I was welcomed most enthusiastically by all the Muslims as one of them.

I did not embrace Islam out of hatred for my ancestral heritage or my people. It was not a desire so much to reject as to fulfill. To me, it meant a transition from parochial to a dynamic and revolutionary faith.

Q: Did your family object to your studying Islam?

A: Although I wanted to become a Muslim as far back as 1954, my family managed to argue me out of it. I was warned that Islam would complicate my life because it is not, like Judaism and Christianity, part of the American scene. I was told that Islam would alienate me from my family and isolate me from the community. At that time my faith was not sufficiently strong to withstand these pressures. Partly as the result of this inner turmoil, I became so ill that I had to discontinue college long before it was time for me to graduate.

For the next two years I remained at home under private medical care, steadily growing worse. In desperation from 1957 - 1959 my parents confined me both to private and public hospitals where I vowed that if ever I recovered sufficiently to be discharged, I would embrace Islam.

After I was allowed to return home, I investigated all the opportunities for meeting Muslims in New York City. It was my good fortune to meet some of the finest men and women anyone could ever hope to meet. I also began to write articles for Muslim magazines.

Q: What was the attitude of your parents and friends after you became Muslim?

A: When I embraced Islam, my parents, relatives and their friends regarded me almost as a fanatic, because I could think and talk of nothing else. To them, religion is a purely private concern which at the most perhaps could be cultivated like an amateur hobby among other hobbies. But as soon as I read the Holy Quran, I knew that Islam was no hobby but life itself!

Q: In what ways did the Holy Quran have an impact on your life?

A: One evening I was feeling particularly exhausted and sleepless, Mother came into my room and said she was about to go to the Larchmont Public Library and asked me if there was any book that I wanted? I asked her to look and see if the library had a copy of an English translation of the Holy Quran. Just think, years of passionate interest in the Arabs and reading every book in the library about them I could lay my hands on but until now, I never thought to see what was in the Holy Quran! Mother returned with a copy for me. I was so eager, I literally grabbed it from her hands and read it the whole night. There I also found all the familiar Bible stories of my childhood.

In my eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school and one year of college, I learned about English grammar and composition, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek in current use, Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, European and American history, elementary science, Biology, music and art--but I had never learned anything about God! Can you imagine I was so ignorant of God that I wrote to my pen-friend, a Pakistani lawyer, and confessed to him the reason why I was an atheist was because I couldn't believe that God was really an old man with a long white beard who sat up on His throne in Heaven.

When he asked me where I had learned this outrageous thing, I told him of the reproductions from the Sistine Chapel I had seen in "Life" Magazine of Michelangelo's "Creation" and "Original Sin." I described all the representations of God as an old man with a long white beard and the numerous crucifixions of Christ I had seen with Paula at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But in the Holy Quran, I read:

"Allah! There is no god but He,-the Living, The Self-subsisting, Supporter of all. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is thee can intercede in His presence except as He permiteth?

He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)." (Quran S.2:255)

"But the Unbelievers,-their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds Allah there, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account. Or (the unbelievers' state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds: depth of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!" (Quran S.24: 39-40)

My first thought when reading the Holy Quran - this is the only true religion - absolutely sincere, honest, not allowing cheap compromises or hypocrisy. In 1959, I spent much of my leisure time reading books about Islam in the New York Public Library. It was there I discovered four bulky volumes of an English translation of Mishkat ul- Masabih. It was then that I learned that a proper and detailed understanding of the Holy Quran is not possible without some knowledge of the relevant Hadith. For how can the holy text correctly be interpreted except by the Prophet to whom it was revealed?

Once I had studied the Mishkat, I began to accept the Holy Quran as Divine revelation. What persuaded me that the Quran must be from God and not composed by Muhammad (PBUH) was its satisfying and convincing answers to all the most important questions of life which I could not find elsewhere.
As a child, I was so mortally afraid of death, particularly the thought of my own death, that after nightmares about it, sometimes I would awaken my parents crying in the middle of the night.

When I asked them why I had to die and what would happen to me after death, all they could say was that I had to accept the inevitable; but that was a long way off and because medical science was constantly advancing, perhaps I would live to be a hundred years old! My parents, family, and all our friends rejected as superstition any thought of the Hereafter, regarding

Judgment Day, reward in Paradise or punishment in Hell as outmoded concepts of by-gone ages.

In vain I searched all the chapters of the Old Testament for any clear and unambiguous concept of the Hereafter. The prophets, patriarchs and sages of the Bible all receive their rewards or punishments in this world. Typical is the story of Job (Hazrat Ayub).

God destroyed all his loved-ones, his possessions, and afflicted him with a loathsome disease in order to test his faith. Job plaintively laments to God why He should make a righteous man suffer. At the end of the story, God restores all his earthly losses but nothing is even mentioned about any possible consequences in the Hereafter.

Although I did find the Hereafter mentioned in the New Testament, compared with that of the Holy Quran, it is vague and ambiguous. I found no answer to the question of death in Orthodox Judaism, for the Talmud preaches that even the worst life is better than death. My parents' philosophy was that one must avoid contemplating the thought of death and just enjoy as best one can, the pleasures life has to offer at the moment.

According to them, the purpose of life is enjoyment and pleasure achieved through self-expression of one's talents, the love of family, the congenial company of friends combined with the comfortable living and indulgence in the variety of amusements that affluent America makes available in such abundance. They deliberately cultivated this superficial approach to life as if it were the guarantee for their continued happiness and good-fortune.

Through bitter experience I discovered that self-indulgence leads only to misery and that nothing great or even worthwhile is ever accomplished without struggle through adversity and self-sacrifice. From my earliest childhood, I have always wanted to accomplish important and significant things.

Above all else, before my death I wanted the assurance that I have not wasted life in sinful deeds or worthless pursuits. All my life I have been intensely serious-minded. I have always detested the frivolity which is the dominant characteristic of contemporary culture. My father once disturbed me with his unsettling conviction that there is nothing of permanent value

and because everything in this modern age accept the present trends inevitable and adjust ourselves to them.

I, however, was thirsty to attain something that would endure forever. It was from the Holy Quran where I learned that this aspiration was possible. No good deed for the sake of seeking the pleasure of God is ever wasted or lost. Even if the person concerned never achieves any worldly recognition, his reward is certain in the Hereafter.

Conversely, the Quran tells us that those who are guided by no moral considerations other than expediency or social conformity and crave the freedom to do as they please, no matter how much worldly success and prosperity they attain or how keenly they are able to relish the short span of their earthly life, will be doomed as the losers on Judgment Day.

Islam teaches us that in order to devote our exclusive attention to fulfilling our duties to God and to our fellow-beings, we must abandon all vain and useless activities which distract us from this end. These teachings of the Holy Quran, made even more explicit by Hadith, were thoroughly compatible with my temperament.

Q: What is your opinion of the Arabs after you became a Muslim?

A: As the years passed, the realization gradually dawned upon me that it was not the Arabs who made Islam great but rather Islam had made the Arabs great. Were it not for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Arabs would be an obscure people today. And were it not for the Holy Quran, the Arabic language would be equally insignificant, if not extinct.

Q: Did you see any similarities between Judaism and Islam?

A: The kinship between Judaism and Islam is even stronger than Islam and Christianity. Both Judaism and Islam share in common the same uncompromising monotheism, the crucial importance of strict obedience to Divine Law as proof of our submission to and love of the Creator, the rejection of the priesthood, celibacy and monasticism and the striking similarity of the Hebrew and Arabic language.

In Judaism, religion is so confused with nationalism, one can scarcely distinguish between the two. The name "Judaism" is derived from Judah-a

tribe. A Jew is a member of the tribe of Judah. Even the name of this religion connotes no universal spiritual message. A Jew is not a Jew by virtue of his belief in the unity of God, but merely because he happened to be born of Jewish parentage. Should he become an outspoken atheist, he is no less "Jewish" in the eyes of his fellow Jews.

Such a thorough corruption with nationalism has spiritually impoverished this religion in all its aspects. God is not the God of all mankind but the God of Israel The scriptures are not God's revelation to the entire human race but primarily a Jewish history book. David and Solomon (peace be upon them) are not full-fledged prophets of God but merely Jewish kings. With the single exception of Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement), the holidays and festivals celebrated by Jews, such as Hanukkah, Purim and Pesach, are of far greater national than religious significance.

Q: Have you ever had the opportunity to talk about Islam to the other Jews?

A: There is one particular incident which really stands out in my mind when I had the opportunity to discuss Islam with a Jewish gentleman. Dr. Shoreibah, of the Islamic Center in New York, introduced me to a very special guest. After one Jumha Salat, I went into his office to ask him some questions about Islam but before I could even greet him with "Assalamu Alaikum", I was completely astonished and surprised to see seated before him an ultra-orthodox Chassidic Jew, complete with earlocks, broad-brimmed black hat, long black silken caftan and a full flowing beard.

Under his arm was a copy of the Yiddish newspaper, "The Daily Forward". He told us that his name was Samuel Kostelwitz and that he worked in New York City as a diamond cutter. Most of his family, he said, lived in the Chassidic community of Williamsburg in Brooklyn, but he also had many relatives and friends in Israel. Born in a small Rumanian town, he had fled from the Nazi terror with his parents to America just prior to the outbreak of the second world-war.

I asked him what had brought him to the mosque? He told us that he had been stricken with intolerable grief ever since his mother died 5 years ago. He had tried to find solace and consolation for his grief in the synagogue but could not when he discovered that many of the Jews, even in the ultra-orthodox community of Williamsburg, were shameless hypocrites.

His recent trip to Israel had left him more bitterly disillusioned than ever. He was shocked by the irreligiousness he found in Israel and he told us that nearly all the young sabras or native-born Israelis are militant atheists. When he saw large herds of swine on one of the kibbutzim (collective farms) he visited, he could only exclaim in horror:

"Pigs in a Jewish state! I never thought that was possible until I came here! Then when I witnessed the brutal treatment meted out to innocent Arabs in Israel, I know then that there is no difference between the Israelis and the Nazis. Never, never in the name of God, could I justify such terrible crimes!"

Then he turned to Dr. Shoreibah and told him that he wanted to become a Muslim but before he took the irrevocable steps to formal conversion, he needed to have more knowledge about Islam. He said that he had purchased from Orientalia Bookshop, some books on Arabic grammar and was trying to teach himself Arabic He apologized to us for his broken English: Yiddish was his native tongue and Hebrew, his second language.

Among themselves, his family and friends spoke only Yiddish. Since his reading knowledge of English was extremely poor, he had no access to good Islamic literature. However, with the aid of an English dictionary, he painfully read "Introduction to Islam" by Muhammad Hamidullah of Paris and praised this as the best book he had ever read. In the presence of Dr. Shoreibah, I spent another hour with Mr. Kostelwitz, comparing the Bible stories of the patriarchs and prophets with their counterparts in the Holy Quran.

I pointed out the inconsistencies and interpolations of the Bible, illustrat ing my point with Noah's alleged drunkenness, accusing David of adultery and Solomon of idolatry (Allah Forbid) and how the Holy Quran raises all these patriarchs to the status of genuine prophets of God and absolves them from all these crimes. I also pointed out why it was Ismail and not Isaac who God commanded Abraham to offer as sacrifice.

In the Bible, God tells Abraham: "Take thine son, thine only son whom thou lovest and offer him up to Me as burnt offering." Now Ismail was born 13 years before Isaac but the Jewish biblical commentators explain that away be belittling Ismail's mother, Hagar, as only a concubine and not Abraham's real wife so they say Isaac was the only legitimate son.

Islamic traditions, however, raise Hagar to the status of a full-fledged wife equal in every respect to Sarah. Mr. Kostelwitz expressed his deepest gratitude to me for spending so much time, explaining those truths to him. To express this gratitude, he insisted on inviting Dr. Shoreibah and me to lunch at the Kosher Jewish delicatessen where he always goes to eat his lunch. Mr.

Kostelwitz told us that he wished more than anything else to embrace Islam but he feared he could not withstand the persecution he would have to face from his family and friends. I told him to pray to God for help and strength and he promised that he would. When he left us, I felt privileged to have spoken with such a gentle and kind person.

Q: What Impact did Islam have on your life ?

A: In Islam, my quest for absolute values was satisfied. In Islam I found all that was true, good and beautiful and that which gives meaning and direction to human life (and death); while in other religions, the Truth is deformed, distorted, restricted and fragmentary.

If any one chooses to ask me how I came to know this, I can only reply my personal life experience was sufficient to convince me. My adherence to the Islamic faith is thus a calm, cool but very intense conviction. I have, I believe, always been a Muslim at heart by temperament, even before I knew there was such a thing as Islam. My conversion was mainly a formality, involving no radical change in my heart at all but rather only making official what I had been thinking and yearning for many years.

Also read Maryam Jameelah's Open Letter to Her Parents in which she invites her mother and father to embrace the one true religion.

(7) Why I Reverted From Judaism To Islam

from brother Fouad's site here: http://www.JewstoIslam.com

MARHABA WELCOME TO MY WEBSITE :)

I would like to take a few moments out to describe my journey to the one true faith Islam.Due to the fact that I live in the Zionist Entity names and small details must be changed as to protect me from the deviant monkies that occupy this land at present.

About 3 years ago I was in a jewish chat room,joking with my fellow co-religonists talking non sence and just kinda hanging out.Some guy kept coming into the room and really rankng on about "israe".Even though I was a Jew at the time I didnt like "israel" and always felt what was going on was against Judaism and humanity.One day I decided I would talk to this anti "israel" guy.As Allah willed it we spoke the entire eve.It ends up he is a devout Muslim! He kept posing questions to me over a 2 year period and had MANY strong points.Being that I was an orthodox Jew who did learn in Yeshiva, I confronted many Rabbis with these arguments he gave me.I have not to this day recieved a a good or true answer.Asper the problem of "israel" and its blatent contradiction to Judaism and the Talmud in Tractate Ketubot 111á , they were all weak on that point aswell.

I think what really pushed me towards the truth was that Jews dont believe God is the Greater in EVREY aspect than man.In fact jews believe that Rabbis are even smarter than God Himself! here is the case in point this is a Talmud that evrey religous Jew believes........Baba Mezia 59b. A rabbi debates God and defeats Him. God admits the rabbi won the debate.......Now to Islam this is Shirq or a form of disbelief. In Yeshiva the meaning of this Talmud or "Peshat" as they refer to it is like this..."God is happy that the Rabbi beat Him with his God given ability of thought!"The Jews go on to say "Judgement in this world is in the Rabbis hands, but in the next world its in God's.

Alhumdililah Thank God today I have left the Jewish cesspool and excepted Islam as the only Truth and Word of Allah.My family and I live in a nice Muslim area in Palestine,and thanks to Allah and my wonderful Palestinian Muslim brothers and sisters continue to grow in Quran and the Sunnah.My kids today are the happiest subhan Allah, now they are free from the restrictive man made laws of present day Judaism, and are free to learn knowledge from others besides the Rabbis.

I really have alot more to say so if you email me I would be glad to reply insh Allah. My email is muslimnotzionist@hotmail.com

I would like to end this webpage with a few other statements from Judaisms Holy Book the Talmud.

Gittin 69a . To heal his flesh a Jew should take dust that lies within the shadow of an outdoor toilet, mix with honey and eat it.

Yebamoth 63a. States that Adam had sexual intercourse with all the animals in the Garden of Eden.

Yebamoth 63a. Declares that agriculture is the lowest of occupations.

Sanhedrin 55b. A Jew may marry a three year old girl (specifically, three years "and a day" old).

Sanhedrin 54b. A Jew may have sex with a child as long as the child is less than nine years old.

Kethuboth 11b. "When a grown-up man has intercourse with a little girl it is nothing."

Yebamoth 59b. A woman who had intercourse with a beast is eligible to marry a Jewish priest. A woman who has sex with a demon is also eligible to marry a Jewish priest.

Abodah Zarah 17a. States that there is not a whore in the world that the Talmudic sage Rabbi Eleazar has not had sex with.

Hagigah 27a. States that no rabbi can ever go to hell.

Baba Mezia 59b. A rabbi debates God and defeats Him. God admits the rabbi won the debate.

Gittin 70a. The Rabbis taught: "On coming from a privy (outdoor toilet) a man should not have sexual intercourse till he has waited long enough to walk half a mile, because the demon of the privy is with him for that time; if he does, his children will be epileptic."

Gittin 69b. To heal the disease of pleurisy ("catarrh") a Jew should "take the excrement of a white dog and knead it with balsam, but if he can possibly

avoid it he should not eat the dog's excrement as it loosens the limbs."

Pesahim 111a. It is forbidden for dogs, women or palm trees to pass between two men, nor may others walk between dogs, women or palm trees. Special dangers are involved if the women are menstruating or sitting at a crossroads.

Menahoth 43b-44a. A Jewish man is obligated to say the following prayer every day: Thank you God for not making me a gentile, a woman or a slave.

(8) Becoming Muslim { Michelle}

In the Name of Allah, most Compassionate, most Merciful

As-salaamu-alaikum,

I come from a Jewish family in New York. My mother was from S. A. but also Jewish. She never was comfortable with anyone knowing that. When my father died, she remarried a Catholic and became one herself. And that is how she brought us up. From the age of 5 I was told that Jesus was also God...? I never felt comfortable with it.

We moved to the Philippines - that is where my stepfather was from. And life there was unbearable. My stepfather, to put it mildly, was abusive to me and my 2 brothers. The effect of that hard life: my spelling is poor, one of my brothers is now a drinker, and the other has a low selfworth.

When I grew up and we returned to the USA, I left home. I took care of myself by working hard. I never had time for God, whoever He was. I did not feel that God helped me in any way, so why bother? I did try to get back to my roots but Judaism made no sense, so I let that go. I did come across Muslims from time to time but the effect was, how do they dress that way, and why do they seem different? Over time, the idea of Islam kept coming back to me, so I tried to find out more.

I read the history and life of Mohammed (saas). That is what got to me: such kindness and sabr (patience) in the face of hardships. It seemed to me that my life had no direction, so I went to learn more. After reading surah Al-Fatihah, I knew I had come home - this is where I wanted to be! I became a

Muslim and have never regretted it I always knew there was only ONE God - ALLAH - and things have not been always easy for me.

My mother died of cancer soon after I became a Muslim. But the faith I have helped me make it. Just being able to go to ALLAH with all my pain was such a relief. It is the only true lifestyle known to man, and it is the truth and the last chance for us. I wish all mankind could come to know the truth (haqq) of Islam, and its peace and beauty!

(9) Becoming Muslim { Sister Penomee (Dr. Kari Ann Owen)}

In the Name of Allah, most Compassionate, most Merciful

A salaam aleikum, beloved family. "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is his messenger."

These are the words of the Shahadah oath, I believe.

The Creator is known by many names. His wisdom is always recognizable, and his presence made manifest in the love, tolerance and compassion present in our community His profound ability to guide us from a war-like individualism so rampant in American society to a belief in the glory and dignity of the Creator's human family, and our obligations to and membership within that family This describes the maturation of a spiritual personality, and perhaps the most desirable maturation of the psychological self, also.

My road to Shahadah began when an admired director, Tony Richardson, died of AIDS. Mr. Richardson was already a brilliant and internationally recognized professional when I almost met him backstage at the play Luther at age 14.

Play righting for me has always been a way of finding degrees of spiritual and emotional reconciliation both within myself and between myself and a world I found rather brutal due to childhood circumstances. Instead of fighting with the world, I let my conflicts fight it out in my plays. Amazingly, some of us have even grown up together!

So as I began accumulating stage credits (productions and staged readings), beginning at age 17, I always retained the hope that I would someday fulfill

my childhood dream of studying and working with Mr. Richardson. When he followed his homosexuality to America (from England) and a promiscuous community, AIDS killed him, and with him went another portion of my sense of belonging to and within American society.

I began to look outside American and Western society to Islamic culture for moral guidance. Why Islam and not somewhere else?

My birthmother's ancestors were Spanish Jews who lived among Muslims until the Inquisition expelled the Jewish community in 1492. In my historical memory, which I feel at a deep level, the call of the muezzin is as deep as the lull of the ocean and the swaying of ships, the pounding of horses' hooves across the desert, the assertion of love in the face of oppression.

I felt the birth of a story within me, and the drama took form as I began to learn of an Ottoman caliph's humanity toward Jewish refugees at the time of my ancestors' expulsions. Allah guided my learning, and I was taught about Islam by figures as diverse as Imam Siddiqi of the South Bay Islamic Association; Sister Hussein of Rahima; and my beloved adopted Sister, Maria Abdin, who is Native American and Muslim and a writer for the SBIA magazine, IQRA.

My first research interview was in a halal butcher shop in San Francisco's Mission District, where my understanding of living Islam was profoundly affected by the first Muslim lady I had ever met: a customer who was in hijab, behaved with a sweet kindness and grace and also read, wrote and spoke four languages.

Her brilliance, coupled with her amazing (to me) freedom from arrogance, had a profound effect on the beginnings of my knowledge of how Islam can affect human behavior.

Little did I know then that not only would a play be born, but a new Muslim. The course of my research introduced me to much more about Islam than a set of facts, for Islam is a living religion. I learned how Muslims conduct themselves with a dignity and kindness which lifts them above the American slave market of sexual competition and violence.

I learned that Muslim men and women can actually be in each others' presence without tearing each other to pieces, verbally and physically. And I learned that modest dress, perceived as a spiritual state,can uplift human behavior and grant to both men and women a sense of their own spiritual worth. Why did this seem so astonishing, and so astonishingly new?

Like most American females, I grew up in a slave market, comprised not only of the sexual sicknesses of my family, but the constant negative judging of my appearance by peers beginning at ages younger than seven. I was taught from a very early age by American society that my human worth consisted solely of my attractiveness (or, in my case, lack of it) to others.

Needless to say, in this atmosphere, boys and girls, men and women, often grew to resent each other very deeply, given the desperate desire for peer acceptance, which seemed almost if not totally dependent not on one's kindness or compassion or even intelligence, but on looks and the perception of those looks by others.

While I do not expect or look for human perfection among Muslims, the social differences are profound, and almost unbelievable to someone like myself.

I do not pretend to have any answers to the conflicts of the Middle East, except what the prophets, beloved in Islam, have already expressed. My disabilities prevent me from fasting, and from praying in the same prayer postures as most of you.

But I love and respect the Islam I have come to know through the behavior and words of the men and women I have come to know in AMILA (American Muslims Intent on Learning and Activism) and elsewhere, where I find a freedom from cruel emotional conflicts and a sense of imminent spirituality. What else do I feel and believe about Islam?

I support and deeply admire Islam's respect for same sex education; for the rights of women as well as men in society; for modest dress; and above all for sobriety and marriage, the two most profound foundations of my life, for I am 21 1/2 years sober and happily married. How wonderful to feel that one and half billion Muslims share my faith in the character development marriage allows us, and also in my decision to remain drug- and alcohol-free. What, then, is Islam's greatest gift in a larger sense?

In a society which presents us with constant pressure to immolate ourselves on the altars of unbridled instinct without respect for consequences, Islam asks us to regard ourselves as human persons created by Allah with the capacity for responsibility in our relations with others. Through prayer and charity and a committment to sobriety and education, if we follow the path of Islam, we stand a good chance of raising children who will be free from the violence and exploitation which is robbing parents and children of safe schools and neighborhoods, and often of their lives.

The support of the AMILA community and other friends, particularly at a time of some strife on the AMILA Net, causes me to affirm my original responses to Islam and declare that this is a marvelous community, for in its affirmation of Allah's gifts of marriage, sobriety and other forms of responsiblity, Islam shows us the way out of hell.

My husband, Silas, and I are grateful for your presence and your friendship. And as we prepare to lay the groundwork for adoption, we hope that we will continue to be blessed with your warm acceptance, for we want our child to feel the spiritual presence of Allah in the behavior of surrounding adults and children. We hope that as other AMILA'ers consider becoming new parents, and become new parents, a progressive Islamic school might emerge... progressive meaning supportive and loving as well as superior in academics, arts and sports.

Maybe our computer whizzes will teach science and math while I teach creative writing and horseback riding!

Please consider us companions on the journey toward heaven, and please continue to look for us at your gatherings, on the AMILA net and in the colors and dreams of the sunset.

For there is no god but Allah, the Creator, and Muhammed, whose caring for the victims of war and violence still brings tears from me, is his Prophet.
A salaam aleikum.

(10) Emad-ud-Deen Richard Leiman's Testimony

My Childhood:

As a child I always had access to a short-wave radio I used to listen to the BBC World Service and the Middle East. I also loved the music from that part of the world and I probably was listening to the Qur’an being recited, but did not know it at the time.

As I grew older:

As I grew older I still listened to the BBC World Service mostly. Back then, they had a programme called "Words of Faith" where they had a 5 to 8 minute talk given by a different religious speaker each day of the week representing all the major religions in the UK. Out of all the speakers, I loved it when the Muslim spoke.

Every time he spoke, I wanted to find out more about Islam. My impression of the Islam was one in which the person who practices Islam was a happy person, not like the mean people portrayed by the American media. I just refused to believe people that loved Allah so much could be like the people portrayed by the media. Since I come from a Jewish background, the thing that united me with Islam was the belief that Allah had no partners.

Working in the UK:

Then came an important time in my life where I was about to meet a real Muslim, but did not know it yet. I was doing contracting computer programming work in New York state when the urge to visit the UK was very strong.

I took a visit to London and loved it. During my visit I went to several employment agencies without luck. One of the agencies gave me several trade magazines. When I arrived back in the states I started to send more CV’s (resumes) to companies and other agencies in the magazines.

Again I came to the UK because one of the companies wanted to interview me. Then I started to visit more companies and agencies when I landed a position even though I was on a visitors visa. The company applied for a work permit and the Department of Employment told us that I had to leave the country in order to process the paperwork. Again I went back to the states. Another Agency obtained a temporary work permit and hired me to the company called LogoTech, at that time was in Egham, Surrey.

Meeting a real Muslim for the first time:

Some time after I was working at LogoTech, I found out that my supervisor Anis Karim was Muslim. I asked him if he knew how I could get a copy of the Holy Qur'an. To my surprise, I had a copy of the Qur'an within a few days. He also asked me to make a pledge. I pledged to make sure that I would have a bath before I read from the Qur'an and that I would never show it to anyone who may make blasphemous remarks about it.

The next day, I took my morning bath and made breakfast. Then whilst eating breakfast I started to read. Later I found out that READ is what Allah had the angel Gabriel instruct our beloved prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to do, even though HE COULD NOT READ OR WRITE!

Well, words can't describe how I felt when I read just that small portion of the worlds most holy book. It took only 10 pages when I told myself that this religion was for me. This was around 1990. The more I read, the more I wanted to know and loved what I was reading. Also at the time I did not know anything about how to pray or any of the details of Islam. If Anis had invited me to go the Masjid in London, I would have gone with him. The only thing I knew about praying to Allah was the Shazute position. At the time I knew that Muslims prayed several times a day and I started to do so at night before I went to bed and in the morning when I woke up.

Back to the states again:

When the work permit ran out. I had to come back to the states and was unemployed for several years. I visited my father in Huntsville, Alabama and created a database application for him. I saw that Huntsville was a high tech cosmopolitan city and decided to try and land a programming position there. My father told me that if I did not get a position, I would have to go back to New Jersey to my mother. They moved from New York to New Jersey. About a fortnight before I was going to go back to New Jersey, I landed a programming position at a company in Huntsville.

Planning a trip to a Muslim country:

My sister and I were planning a trip to Indonesia because we had a pen-pal on the internet. My sister asked me if I could help her find Islamic Jewelry as a gift. At that time I had no idea that there were Muslims in Huntsville.

My first trip to a Masjid (Mosque):

Then Allah put things into place. I remembered that there was a shop called Crescent Imports which I thought was run by Muslims. It was not. It was run by the group called Nation Of Islam. Now here is the strange part in which only Allah could be put in place. We spoke to the owner of the shop and told him that we wanted to find Islamic jewelry. He directed us to the Huntsville Islamic Center.

I do thank Allah for having them direct me to the Masjid. We went to the building, but there was only one car parked there. I spoke to a man in the car, and he told us that we should speak to the Imam about where to find the Jewelry. I was still afraid to go into the building because to me it is such a holy place.

Invitation to pray with other Muslims:

I saw a lady at work wearing a Hijaab. I told her about my accepting Islam personally and she said "why don't you visit the Masjid in Huntsville?" We eventually went back to the Masjid after I summed up enough courage to go into that a holy place. We spoke to the Imam and he invited me to make Salat with the Brothers. This was a turning point in my life. I loved it and started to come to the Masjid once a week at night. Then I started to come several times a week at night. The urge to come more times was stronger and now I make all 5 prayers each day mostly at the Masjid, except Asr and Margrib when at work.

I officially accepted Islam!!!!!!!!!!

In November of 1996 I publicly made Shahada. At work I pray Duhur and Asr by myself or with other brothers in a small Mosque right in the work place! I proudly carry my prayer mats in the work hallways in an attempt to get people to ask me what they are (a form of Dawah). When this happens I tell them that I am Muslim and the mats are what I use for prayers Also, my work area has Islamic decorations all over the place, and that includes my computer where the graphic on the screen is that of the Kabah or our Masjid.

Conclusion:

I am also a member of the Dawah Committee at the Masjid and am also trying to make Dawah by providing this very web page.

Now that I am a Muslim, (One who submits to Allah) there is no turning back to unbelief!!!!!

(11) I Had Not Gone Shopping for a New Religion by Michael Wolfe

After twenty-five years a writer in America, I wanted something to soften my cynicism. I was searching for new terms by which to see. The way one is raised establishes certain needs in this department. From a pluralist background, I naturally placed great stress on the matters of racism and freedom.

Then, in my early twenties, I had gone to live in Africa for three years. During this time, which was formative for me, I did rubbed shoulders with blacks of many different tribes, with Arabs, Berbers, and even Europeans, who were Muslims. By and large these people did not share the Western obsession with race as a social category. In our encounters being oddly coloured rarely mattered. I was welcomed first and judged on merit later.

By contrast, Europeans and Americans, including many who are free of racist notions, automatically class people racially. Muslims classified people by their faith and their actions. I found this transcendent and refreshing.

Malcolm X saw his nation’s salvation in it. “America needs to understand Islam,” he wrote, “because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem”.

I was looking for an escape route, too, from the isolating terms of a materialistic culture. I wanted access to a spiritual dimension, but the conventional paths I had known as a boy were closed. My father had been a Jew; my mother Christian. Because of my mongrel background, I had a foot in two religious camps.

Both faiths were undoubtedly profound. Yet the one that emphasizes a chosen people I found insupportable; while the other, based in a mystery, repelled me. A century before, my maternal great-great-grandmother’s name had been set in stained glass at the high street Church of Christ in Hamilton, Ohio. By the time I was twenty, this meant nothing to me.

These were the terms my early life provided. The more I thought about it now, the more I returned to my experiences in Muslim Africa. After two return trips to Morocco, in 1981 and 1985, I came to feel that Africa, the continent, had little to do with the balanced life I found there. It was not, that is, a continent I was after, nor an institution, either. I was looking for a framework I could live with, a vocabulary of spiritual concepts applicable to the life I was living now. I did not want to “trade in” my culture. I wanted access to new meanings.

After a mid-Atlantic dinner I went to wash up in the bathroom. During my absence a quorum of Hasidim lined up to pray outside the door. By the time I had finished, they were too immersed to notice me. Emerging from the bathroom, I could barely work the handle. Stepping into the aisle was out of the question.

I could only stand with my head thrust into the hallway, staring at the congregation’s backs. Holding palm-size prayer books, they cut an impressive figure, tapping the texts on their breastbones as they divined. Little by little the movements grew erratic, like a mild, bobbing form of rock and roll. I watched from the bathroom door until they were finished, then slipped back down the aisle to my seat.

We landed together later that night in Brussels. Reboarding, I found a discarded Yiddish newspaper on a food tray. When the plane took off for Morocco, they were gone.

I do not mean to imply here that my life during this period conformed to any grand design. In the beginning, around 1981, I was driven by curiosity and an appetite for travel. My favourite place to go, when I had the money, was Morocco. When I could not travel, there were books. This fascination brought me into contact with a handful of writers driven to the exotic, authors capable of sentences like this, by Freya Stark:

The perpetual charm of Arabia is that the traveller finds his level there simply as a human being; the people’s directness, deadly to the sentimental or the pedantic, like the less complicated virtues; and the pleasantness of being liked for oneself might, I think, be added to the five reasons for travel given me by Sayyid Abdulla, the watchmaker; “to leave one’s troubles

behind one; to earn a living; to acquire learning; to practise good manners; and to meet honourable men".

I could not have drawn up a list of demands, but I had a fair idea of what I was after. The religion I wanted should be to metaphysics as metaphysics is to science. It would not be confined by a narrow rationalism or traffic in mystery to please its priests. There would be no priests, no separation between nature and things sacred. There would be no war with the flesh, if I could help it. Sex would be natural, not the seat of a curse upon the species. Finally, I did want a ritual component, daily routine to sharpen the senses and discipline my mind. Above all, I wanted clarity and freedom. I did not want to trade away reason simply to be saddled with a dogma.

The more I learned about Islam, the more it appeared to conform to what I was after.

Most of the educated Westerners I knew around this time regarded any strong religious climate with suspicion. They classified religion as political manipulation, or they dismissed it as a medieval concept, projecting upon it notions from their European past.

It was not hard to find a source for their opinions. A thousand years of Western history had left us plenty of fine reasons to regret a path that led through so much ignorance and slaughter. From the Children's Crusade and the Inquisition to the transmogrified faiths of nazism and communism during our century, whole countries have been exhausted by belief. Nietzsche's fear, that the modern nation-state would become a substitute religion, have proved tragically accurate. Our century, it seemed to me, was ending in an age beyond belief, which believers inhabited as much as agnostics.

Regardless of church affiliation, secular humanism is the air westerners breathe, the lens we gaze through. Like any world view, this outlook is pervasive and transparent. It forms the basis of our broad identification with democracy and with the pursuit of freedom in all its countless and beguiling forms. Immersed in our shared preoccupations, one may easily forget that other ways of life exist on the same planet.

At the time of my trip, for instance, 650 million Muslims with a majority representation in forty-four countries adhered to the formal teachings of Islam. In addition, about 400 million more were living as minorities in

Europe, Asia and the Americas. Assisted by postcolonial economics, Islam has become in a matter of thirty years a major faith in Western Europe. Of the world's great religions, Islam alone was adding to its fold.

My politicized friends were dismayed by my new interest. They all but universally confused Islam with the machinations of half a dozen middle eastern tyrants. The books they read, the new broadcasts they viewed depicted the faith as a set of political functions. Almost nothing was said of its spiritual practice. I liked to quote Mae West to them: "Anytime you take religion for a joke, the laugh's on you".

Historically a Muslim sees Islam as the final, matured expression of an original religion reaching back to Adam. It is as resolutely monotheistic as Judaism, whose major Prophets Islam reveres as links in a progressive chain, culminating in Jesus and Muhammad. Essentially a message of renewal, Islam has done its part on the world stage to return the forgotten taste of life's lost sweetness to millions of people. Its book, the Qur'an, caused Goethe to remark, "You see, this teaching never fails; with all our systems, we cannot go, and generally speaking no man can go, further".

Traditional Islam is expressed through the practice of five pillars. Declaring one's faith, prayer, charity, and fasting are activities pursued repeatedly throughout one's life. Conditions permitting, each Muslim is additionally charged with undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. The Arabic term for this fifth rite is Hadj. Scholars relate the word to the concept of kasd, "aspiration," and to the notion of men and women as travellers on earth.

In Western religions pilgrimage is a vestigial tradition, a quaint, folkloric concept commonly reduced to metaphor. Among Muslims, on the other hand, the hadj embodies a vital experience for millions of new pilgrims every year. In spite of the modern content of their lives, it remains an act of obedience, a profession of belief, and the visible expression of a spiritual community. For a majority of Muslims the hadj is an ultimate goal, the trip of a lifetime.

As a convert I felt obliged to go to Makkah. As an addict to travel I could not imagine a more compelling goal.

The annual, month-long fast of Ramadan precedes the hadj by about one hundred days. These two rites form a period of intensified awareness in Muslim society. I wanted to put this period to use. I had read about Islam; I had joined a Mosque near my home in California; I had started a practice. Now I hoped to deepen what I was learning by submerging myself in a religion where Islam infuses every aspect of existence.

I planned to begin in Morocco, because I knew that country well and because it followed traditional Islam and was fairly stable. The last place I wanted to start was in a backwater full of uproarious sectarians. I wanted to paddle the mainstream, the broad, calm water.

(11) Becoming Muslim Muhammad Asad (Austria)

Statesman, Journalist, and Author

About the author:

Muhammad Asad, Leopold Weiss, was born in Livow, Austria (later Poland) in 1900, and at the age of 22 made his visit to the Middle East. He later became an outstanding foreign correspondent for the Franfurtur Zeitung, and after his conversion to Islam traveled and worked throughout the Muslim world, from North Africa to as far East as Afghanistan.

After years of devoted study he became one of the leading Muslim scholars of our age. After the establishment of Pakistan, he was appointed the Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction, West Punjab and later on became Pakistan's Alternate Representative at the United Nations.

Muhammad Asad's two important books are: Islam at the Crossroads and Road to Mecca. He also produced a monthly journal Arafat. At present he is working upon an English translation of the Holy Qur'an. [Asad completed his translation and has passed away. -MSA-USC]

In 1922 I left my native country, Austria, to travel through Africa and Asia as a Special Correspondent to some of the leading Continental newspapers, and spent from that year onward nearly the whole of my time in the Islamic East. My interest in the nations with which I came into contact was in the beginning that of an outsider only.

I saw before me a social order and an outlook on life fundamentally different from the European; and from the very first there grew in me a sympathy for the more tranquil -- I should rather say: more mechanized mode of living in Europe. This sympathy gradually led me to an investigation of the reasons for such a difference, and I became interested in the religious teachings of the Muslims.

At the time in question, that interest was not strong enough to draw me into the fold of Islam, but it opened to me a new vista of a progressive human society, of real brotherly feeling. The reality, however, of presentday Muslim life appeared to be very far from the ideal possibilities given in the religious teachings of Islam. Whatever, in Islam, had been progress and movement, had turned, among the Muslims, into indolence and stagnation; whatever there had been of generosity and readiness for self-sacrifice, had become, among the present-day Muslims, perverted into narrow-mindedness and love of an easy life.

Prompted by this discovery and puzzled by the obvious incongruency between Once and Now, I tried to approach the problem before me from a more intimate point of view: that is, I tried to imagine myself as being within the circle of Islam. It was a purely intellectual experiment; and it revealed to me, within a very short time, the right solution. I realized that the one and only reason for the social and cultural decay of the Muslims consisted in the fact that they had gradually ceased to follow the teachings of Islam in spirit. Islam was still there; but it was a body without soul.

The very element which once had stood for the strength of the Muslim world was now responsible for its weakness: Islamic society had been built, from the very outset, on religious foundations alone, and the weakening of the foundations has necessarily weakened the cultural structure -- and possibly might cause its ultimate disappearance.

The more I understood how concrete and how immensely practical the teachings of Islam are, the more eager became my questioning as to why the Muslims had abandoned their full application to real life. I discussed this problem with many thinking Muslims in almost all the countries between the Libyan Desert and the Pamirs, between the Bosphorus and the Arabian Sea.

It almost became an obsession which ultimately overshadowed all my other intellectual interests in the world of Islam. The questioning steadily grew in emphasis -- until I, a non-Muslim, talked to Muslims as if I were to defend Islam from their negligence and indolence.

The progress was imperceptible to me, until one day -- it was in autumn 1925, in the mountains of Afghanistan -- a young provincial Governor said to me: "But you are a Muslim, only you don't know it yourself." I was struck by these words and remained silent. But when I came back to Europe once again, in 1926, I saw that the only logical consequence of my attitude was to embrace Islam

So much about the circumstances of my becoming a Muslim. Since then I was asked, time and again: "Why did you embrace Islam ? What was it that attracted you particularly ?" -- and I must confess: I don't know of any satisfactory answer. It was not any particular teaching that attracted me, but the whole wonderful, inexplicably coherent structure of moral teaching and practical life programme.

I could not say, even now, which aspect of it appeals to me more than any other. Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other: nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure.

Probably this feeling that everything in the teachings and postulates of Islam is "in its proper place," has created the strongest impression on me. There might have been, along with it, other impressions also which today it is difficult for me to analyze. After all, it was a matter of love; and love is composed of many things; of our desires and our loneliness, of our high aims and our shortcomings, of our strength and our weakness.

So it was in my case. Islam came over me like a robber who enters a house by night; but, unlike a robber, it entered to remain for good. Ever since then I endeavoured to learn as much as I could about Islam. I studied the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); I studied the language of Islam and its history, and a good deal of what has been written about it and against it.

I spent over five years in the Hijaz and Najd, mostly in al-Madinah, so that I might experience something of the original surroundings in which this religion was preached by the Arabian Prophet. As the Hijaz is the meeting centre of Muslims from many countries, I was able to compare most of the different religious and social views prevalent in the Islamic world in our days.

Those studies and comparisons created in me the firm conviction that Islam, as a spiritual and social phenomenon, is still in spite of all the drawbacks caused by the deficiencies of the Muslims, by far the greatest driving force mankind has ever experienced; and all my interest became, since then, centred around the problem of its regeneration.

(12) Sabbatai Zevi

The Jewish mystic and messiah, Sabbatai Zevi (1626-76), referred to by the abbreviated title of Amirah by his followers, was born in Smyrna (now Izmir), Turkey. Sabbatai's first teacher was the Gadol Reb. Isaac di Alba, a member of the Bais Din in Smyrna with whom he studied Kabbalah beginning in 1650. After six years under Master Isaac, Sabbatai continued his studies under the illustrious R. Joseph Eskapha, author of "Rosh Yosef" and a leading halakhist of his time. He most probably gave Sabbatai smicha and the rabbinical title of hakham ("wise" or "sage") when the latter was still an adolescent.

By 1648 Sabbatai showed signs of what modern scholars (who are caught up in the meme of reductionist materialism) claim to be manic-depressive psychosis. In other words, strange behavior and violations of religious law, and proclaimed himself the Messiah. Expelled from Smyrna around 1651-54, he wandered through Greece, Thrace, Palestine, and Egypt. In 1665 he met the charismatic Nathan of Gaza, who persuaded him that he was indeed the Messiah. Sabbatai Zevi then formally revealed himself, named 1666 as the millennium, and soon gained fervent support in Palestine and the Diaspora.

It is important to realize that the entire Jewish world of 1665-66 believed that Sabbatai was no mere "prophet" or "teacher" but the Promised Messiah and a living incarnation of God. It was the only messianic movement to engult the whole of Jewry; from England to Persia, from Germany to Morocco, from Poland to the Yemen.

Sabbatai attempted to land in Constantinople in 1666, but was captured andimprisoned by the Turkish authorities in 1666. He converted to Islam, supposedly to escape execution, although Nathan and his other followers put a different interpretation on this. Sabbatai's conversion actually represented the descent into the klippotic realm in order to reclaim the lost sparks of light. Many of his followers converted likewise.

Sabbatai - who, like Meher Baba and Max Theon was called "The Beloved" by his followers - may have had close relations with the Sufis. He died in exile in Ulcinj (in what is now Montenegro, part of the federation of Serbia and Montenegro). The Sabbatean movement was revived in the 18th century by Jacob Frank.

(13) Abdullah Ibn Sailam

Al-Husayn ibn Sailam was a Jewish rabbi in Yathrib who was widely respected and honored by the people of the city even by those who were not Jewish. He was known for his piety and goodness, his upright conduct and his truthfulness.

Al-Husayn lived a peaceful and gentle life but he was serious, purposeful and organized in the way he spent his time. For a fixed period each day, he would worship, teach and preach in the temple. Then he would spend some time in his orchard, looking after date palms, pruning and pollinating. Thereafter, to increase his understanding and knowledge of his religion, he would devote himself to the study of the Torah.

In this study, it is said. he was particularly struck by some verses of the Torah which dealt with the coming of a Prophet who would complete the message of previous Prophets. Al-Husayn therefore took an immediate and keen interest when he heard reports of the appearance of a Prophet in Makkah. He said:

"W hen I heard of the appearance of the Messenger of God, peace be on him, I began to make enquiries about his name, his genealogy, his characteristics, his time and place and I began to compare this information with what is contained m our books. From these enquiries, I became convinced about the authenticity of his prophethood and I affirmed the truth of his mission. However, I concealed my conclusions from the Jews.

I held my tongue... Then came the day when the Prophet, peace be on him, left Makkah and headed for Yathrib. When he reached Yathrib and stopped at Quba, a man came rushing into the city, calling out to people and announcing the arrival of the Prophet. At that moment, I was at the top of a palm tree doing some work. My aunt, Khalidah bint al-Harith, was sitting under the tree. On hearing the news, I shouted:

'Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! (God is Great! God is Great!' When my aunt heard my takbir, she remonstrated with me: 'May God frustrate you...By God, if you had heard that Moses was coming you would not have been more enthusiastic.'

'Auntie, he is really, by God, the 'brother' of Moses and follows his religion. He was sent with the same mission as Moses.' She was silent for a while and then said: 'Is he the Prophet about whom you spoke to us who would be sent to confirm the truth preached by previous (Prophets) and complete the message of his Lord?' 'Yes,' I replied.

Without any delay or hesitation, I went out to meet the Prophet. I saw crowds of people at his door. I moved about in the crowds until I reached close to him. The first words I heard him say were:

'O people! Spread peace...Share food...Pray during the night while people (normally) sleep... and you will enter Paradise in peace...'

I looked at him closely. I scrutinized him and was convinced that his face was not that of an imposter. I went closer to him and made the declaration of faith that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

The Prophet turned to me and asked: 'What is your name?' 'Al-Husayn ibn Sailam,' I replied.

'Instead, it is (now) Abdullah ibn Sallam,' he said (giving me a new name). 'Yes,' I agreed. 'Abdullah ibn Sailam (it shall be). By Him who has sent you with the Truth, I do not wish to have another name after this day.'

I returned home and introduced Islam to my wife, my children and the rest of my household. They all accepted Islam including my aunt Khalidah who

was then an old lady. However, I advised them then to conceal our acceptance of Islam from the Jews until I gave them permission. They agreed.

Subsequently, I went back to the Prophet, peace be on him, and said: 'O Messenger of God! The Jews are a people (inclined to) slander and falsehood. I want you to invite their most prominent men to meet you. (During the meeting however), you should keep me concealed from them in one of your rooms. Ask them then about my status among them before they find out of my acceptance of Islam. Then invite them to Islam. If they were to know that I have become a Muslim, they would denounce me and accuse me of everything base and slander me.'

The Prophet kept me in one of his rooms and invited the prominent Jewish personalities to visit him. He introduced Islam to them and urged them to have faith in God...They began to dispute and argue with him about the Truth. When he realized that they were not inclined to accept Islam, he put the question to them:

'What is the status of Al-Husayn ibn Sailam among you?'

'He is our sayyid (leader) and the son of our sayyid He is our rabbi and our alim (scholar), the son of our rabbi and alim.'

'If you come to know that he has accepted Islam, would you accept Islam also?' asked the Prophet.

'God forbid! He would not accept Islam. May God protect him from accepting Islam,' they said (horrified).

At this point I came out in full view of them and announced: 'O assembly of Jews! Be conscious of God and accept what Muhammad has brought. By God, you certainly know that he is the Messenger of God and you can find prophecies about him and mention of his name and characteristics in your Torah. I for my part declare that he is the Messenger of God. I have faith in him and believe that he is true. I know him.'

'You are a liar,' they shouted. 'By God, you are evil and ignorant, the son of an evil and ignorant person.' And they continued to heap every conceivable abuse on me..."

Abdullah ibn Sailam approached Islam with a soul thirsty for knowledge. He was passionately devoted to the Quran and spent much time reciting and studying its beautiful and sublime verses. He was deeply attached to the noble Prophet and was constantly in his company.

Much of his time he spent in the masjid, engaged in worship, in learning and in teaching. He was known for his sweet, moving and effective way of teaching study circles of Sahabah who assembled regularly in the Prophet's mosque.

Abdullah ibn Sallam was known among the Sahabah as a man from ahl-al-Jannah "- the people of Paradise. This was because of his determination on the advice of the Prophet to hold steadfastly to the "most trustworthy handhold" that is belief in and total submission to God.

(15) Hasan from Yard Al Mukaddasa

Assalamu Aleikum !
Greetings from the Palestine !

My Muslim name is Hasan. I am a new convert to Islam.
I am keeping the Ramadan third day already and feeling
better than usually.

I am learning on how to pray, but doing salat only once
a day. I intend to learn Islam little by little, more and more,
because this is the way of life !

For me Islam also is the way of rejecting Zionist ideology,
because Zionism is the enemy of Jewish people.
I myself part-Jewish (by father).

My circumstances in this country are very complicated but
I am going to do what Allah has put on my heart !

Ma'asalami !

With respect
Hasan from Yard Al Mukaddasa

(16) Reform Jew convert to Islam

I was raised in a reformed home. I attended Hebrew school for 4 years. It was tough. Four days a week after school then the final year before bar mitzvah, on Sundays as well, in order to learn the Haftorah [a section of the Torah].

For the first three years, Me and my friend Steve would get off the bus and head to Rosen's drug store. There we would eat chips and read comic books until about 6 PM, then head back to the Hebrew school to catch the bus home. The school didn't say anything as my parents kept paying and in the end I made my bar mitzvah. That was the extent of religion in my house. We, [my sibs] all went through it basically for our grandfather's sake.

He was a sweet grandfather and I am sorry he did not live long enough to hear about Islam.
A year before my bar mitzvah, my father remarried. My mother died 3 years before. My stepmother was catholic, so now I made a killing during the holidays. Seriously though, as a reformed Jewish home, (secular for the most part) with a single parent for four years, I was raised with less than stellar morals. I compare that to what I now have as a Muslim. Actually, I was no different than my close friends, who were all Christians.

Frankly, I don't know why, but I did not really seek nor want to hang out with Jewish kids.

I spent most of my weekends before my father remarried with my aunts who were quite Jewish, down to the salami and lox sandwiches, and wise potato chips that would smell up the whole [indoor seating area] of the drive-in we
attended nearly every week. We had quite a reputation. But even though they lived in the Jewish section of the city, I still did not really have close relations with Jewish kids.

Maybe this was the divine plan so I would enter Islam easily. God knows best. Actually, I did not enter Islam so easily and I had my share of struggles with my deep rooted lusts and desires. My sister, who is three years older

than me [an we are in the baby boomer age group] became Muslim when she was about 19 years old. She moved to New York City and there met a Muslim and over time embraced Islam. That was about 27 years ago and she is a very seriously committed Muslima to this day, Al Hamdulillah.

She discussed Islam with me whenever I would visit. Finally, they asked me if I would like to embrace Islam. This was during a visit to New York. I was in nursing school at the time. I took the “Shahada” that weekend, which means to declare one’s belief and acceptance of Islam verbally by saying; “Ashadu ala illaha ill allaah, washadu anna muhammadur wa rasulullah.” “I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except for the One True God Allah [Who is Alone and without any partners] and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger and slave of Allah.”

After that, I returned to my city and the next day, life went on as usual. That was not good. But in those days [late 70’s] there was little Islamic information and in my situation at school I was not really looking for any religion. I was so deep into fulfilling my self centered desires that I could not ‘let go and let God’ so to speak. The importance of Islam did not enter my heart nor mind, and nearly 20 years later in repeating this [embarrassing] story so many times, I finally realized why it took me several years too actually embrace Islam. I accepted Islam not for the pleasure and sole purpose of worshipping Allah.

I accepted Islam for the pleasure of my sister and her husband. I love my sister dearly and I have always trusted her completely. When I saw her devotion to Islam, especially after she tried so many other things, I believed what she was telling me, yet, not searching, struggling or questioning life, I did not feel the need nor understand the importance of Islam in ones life. The important point here is that one embraces Islam out of sincere conviction and certainty that Allah is One and Muhammad is the Final Messenger. One should never embrace Islam for any other reason. And Allah says in His Book [Qur’an], “There is no compulsion in Religion.

Indeed the Right path has become distinct from the false path. Those who disbelief in ‘taghut’ [anything else worshipped and called upon other than Allah] and believe in Allah [Islamic Monotheism] have grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break.” Q2:256

Some years later and after some serious foolishness, I found myself rejected by a woman. My self-centered, womanizing, arrogant self could not at all handle it and I suffered terribly for two years. In retrospect the situation did not call for such punishment, yet, I understand that this "mercy" is what I needed to turn to Allah and finally embrace what I only uttered several years before.

In addiction treatment parlance, this was the beginning of my recovery, and as anyone who works in addiction or has an addiction disorder knows, recovery is a slow and at times, painful process. [I work in addiction.] Today, I am fully committed to living and dying in Islam. I am certain of it based on evidences and proofs and not emotional conviction alone. The only thing I can say is that anything that could take me out of 'my world' and away from what I loved so much then make what I loved so much the things now hated my me, then it must be only from God, because I cannot think of anything material that could do that to me.

Allah says; "We will show them our signs in the furthest regions [of the earth] and in their own souls, until
it becomes clear to them that this is the truth." Q41: 53

I have learned my purpose through Islam and it is as Allah says in His Book; "I have only created jinn's and men, that they may worship Me." [Q51: 56] It puts things into perspective for me.

(17) Rabbi Morocco: Abdul Haqq Al-Islami

God, with His wisdom in what He destines and plans, has shown to me since 16 years the truth that no sane person would doubt, the only ones doubting it are those associated with falsehood, which is: To believe in our lord and Prophet Muhammad –pbuh- and to follow him with regards to all of the law.

And it was of His wisdom that he destined that I would hide it and keep it and not announce it and show it until God guided me and inspired me: that this amount is not sufficient and it would not save me, rather what is incumbent on me is: to announce His oneness, and to utter my glorifying of Him and exalting Him, and to announce (my) belief in His Messenger Muhammad –pbuh-.

So I hurried to that which would save me from the painful punishment, that which would get me closer to the gardens of delight. Thus announcing the words of monotheism and uttering my glorifying and exalting I said: “I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship save Allah alone with no partners and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.”

Then, thanks to God, all of my family and children have become Muslims because of me and all of those who were close to me whom God destined to be pleased. All of that is but a Mercy from God that has reached us, and a blessing that is general and conclusive, and a kindness that led his servants to His path of guidance, we could not truly have been led aright if Allah had not guided us to this.

Praise is to His, so is the creation and orders, in His hand is the good and bad, the beneficial and the harmful, He sends who He will astray and guides whom He will, He will not be questioned as to that which He does, but they will be questioned.

And when God, the Most High, destined that which he bestowed on me of Islam, and to enter the religion of the best of His creation –pbuh-, some of the students in the city of Sabta (a coastal city in northern Morocco, named for the obligation of keeping the Sabbath (Arabic: Sabt) by the Jews) – may God honour them and protect her-, suggested that I write a treatise showing the situation of the Jews –may Allah curse them- with regards to misguidance and awful disbelief, and the horrible ascribing (of partners), and that which they believe in which are pure lies: to deny the prophet-hood of our lord and master Muhammad –pbuh-, and it will be, God willing, an effacer of their creed, a quencher of their principles.

I have sought assistance from God, the Most High none is worthy of worship but He, with regards to that which (they) suggested to me. I am also seeking to get closer to God, the most High, using bright proofs and sharp judgments that proves the corruption of their brains, and announces how daring they are, and how rude they are in what they say.

I have limited myself to that which is mentioned in their books, of which they cannot deny, nor dispute in any way, so that it would be overcoming to them, and greater in being a proof against them, and that which is more relevant in use as a proof. I have made the Hebrew texts from the Torah –

according to them – or from other books of theirs and authorships written in red, and the explanation is in black ink according the exegesis of their decreed scholars.

I seek refuge in God for reporting their disbelief and the ugliness of their thoughts. I have made it short and simple without prolonging. I named it my book " Al-Husam Al-mamdood fee Al-rad Ala Al-Yahood".

(18) Moshe

I am Jewish and converting to Islam, not bacause Judaism is similair to Judaism but because Islam is the Rational choice. I wanted to baleive the Torah is true and like most Jews i tried to block out reality, thinking if i ignore the Quranic revelation it would go away and the fact the Quran mentions facts like, the expansion of the universe occurs, the universe was formed with a big bang and the planets by the contraction of early gases.

I pretended it didnt matter that my religion was, to be honest little more than a collage of fragments of cooked up false albeit well meaning ideas, Adam you objectively look at Judaism and Islam, not as a Jew but as am intellectual, bacause Islam is the Rational and intellectual choice. I still hold prejudices that Muslims are uncultured compared to sophisticated Jews and that it would be grea to live in Israel. But Islam is the truth, Ha Emet.

The reasom most Frum or orthadox Jews dont become Muslim is because of ignorance, prejudice and an active desire to disbeleive in Islam, if it wasnt for the scientific proof in the Quran and hadith, i would have quite happily dismissed it as a pale imitation of Judaism, i gain a great sattisfaction thinking i am from HaShems 1 chosen nation and that i am better than the rest of the world and especially the Ishamaelites but the truth is Our God set up his final prophet as an Arab. now it took me a long time to accept that God gave the final prophet hood to an Ishamelite but as i am objective i had to swallow my pride and accept it.

I miss Judaism sooooo much, waering my Tzit Tzit and my Yarmulka, spending countless hours studying the amazing and fascinating parables, stories and teachings of the Talmud, maimonides, Baal haturim, Kli yaakov, Rashi and the other insightfull torah commentators, but on outside evaluation i know that

although i truly loved these books there foundation was not on Gods true word.

Jews everywhere need an objective re-evaluation of the Tanakh and the Quran forgeting racism and prejudice and i think the results will be pleasing.

(19) Founder of Al Azhar

Yaqub Bin Killis

Fatimi Wazir, Abu al-Farj Yaqub bin Yusuf known as Ibn Killis, was born of an honorable family of Baghdad. By birth he was a Jew, born in 318 A.H./930 C.E. At the young age he came with his father to Egypt where he started his political life at the court of Kafur. He was very intelligent, hard working and honest. Very soon he secured important position in the Court of Kafur as an expert in economic. In 356 A.H./967 C.E., he embraced Islam by which Kafur was highly pleased and appointed him as his courtier. By this promotion of Yaqub, Wazir Ibn Furat of the court of Kafur got excited with jealousy and was searching a cause to fall against him. Incidentally in 357 A.H./967 C.E. Kafur died and Wazir Ibn Furat arrested all his companions including Yaqub bin Killis. It is said that Yaqub bribed the jailor and absconded to West where Hazrat Imam Mu'izz was in power on the throne of Imamat and Caliphate.

Hazrat Imam Mu'izz, assigned Yaqub the responsibility of country's economy. Through his past experiences he carried out his work with great efficiency. Thereafter at the time of conquest of Egypt, Hazrat Imam Mu'izz, deputed him with Jawhar as-Siqilli for the management there. According to another version, Yaqub accompanied Hazrat Imam Mu'izz to Egypt in 362 A.H. In the beginning, Ibn Furat was continued in the office of Wizarat at Egypt but in 363 A.H./974 C.E. he resigned and Hazrat Imam Mu'izz handed over the administration to Yaqub bin Killis.

During the last period of Imam Mu'izz, and the first two years of the period of Imam Aziz, (365-386 A.H.), due to toil, honesty and intelligence of Yaqub bin Killis, this position became firm and stable, so much so that in 367-68 A.H./977-78 C.E. Imam Aziz, appointed him as Wazir al Adjall (Chief Minister). Prior to this, in the Caliphate of the first four Imams, an assistant was called 'Wasta' and in this way Yaqub bin Killis was the first Wazir-i-Adjall (Chief Minister) of Fatimid Caliphate.

During his office of Wazarat, Yaqub bin Killis established various departments anew for the administration of the state - promoted agriculture, reformed trade and stabilised

currency - by which country began to flourish and revenue of provinces increased. In this very period Central Exchequer was so much solid in wealth that neither before nor afterwards such a wealth ever accrued. In 373 A.H. he had fallen Karachi (Pakistan) from his office and it is said that Imam Aziz. had penalised him with the fine of 200.000 dinars. The actual cause of his removal is not known. Dr. Zahid Ali assumes that because Ibn Killis had treated badly one of the court prisoners of al-Aziz to whom Imam had promised all honours, therefore Ibn Killis had to pay a fine. All the same within a lapse of few months, in 374 A.H., he was reinstated in the office and was also forgiven.

Sickness and Death: It is said that Yaqub bin Killis fell seriously ill on the 21st of Shawwal 380 A.H. Imam Aziz visited him and said: "0 Yaqub! If your recovery is to be gained through spending wealth then I am prepared to give away the whole wealth of the state. And if your life is saved by sacrificing any life, I am ready to sacrifice my own son". By this it is understood what position Yaqub bin Killis held with Hazrat Imam Aziz. Sickness of Yaqub began to worsen day by day and on the 4th of Dhil Haj 380A.H./991 C.E. he succumbed to death.

His death was mourned throughout Egypt. His shroud was decorated with 50 pieces of clothes of which 30 were embroidered with gold thread. According to Ibn Khallikan, 100 poets composed Marsia, i.e. lamenting stanzas, and every poet earned his reward from the Imam. In Cairo a place was named 'Al Harat al-Waziria' in his honour.

Educational Status: With the political sciences Yaqub bin Killis was also endowed with a thorough knowledge of religion. He was a great scholar and was fond of literature. It is said that he wrote many books in which Mukhtasar-ul-Fiqah' (Risala-t-ul-Waziria) is worth mentioning. This work is on theology and 40 theologians participated in its compilation. Besides, he was at his palace lecturing every Friday night on different subjects, where judges, theologians, grammarians, traditionalists and poets used to gather to hear him.

In Jama-e-Azhar he gave vent to religious education and upon his instructions a university was established in Jama-e-Azhar. which exists until today.

The Story of his wealth: Yaqub bin Killis was an efficient wazir and through his efficiency introduced many reforms, as a result of which public was very much at ease. wealthy and treasury was full of wealth. Hazrat Imam Aziz, had given him wide powers and he was also drawing a good remuneration from the Treasury with a high position in

the government. Consequently, he was in possession of the force of 4,000 young men. The uniform of his guards was, .similar to that of the guards of Hazrat Imam Aziz that is silky. Yaqub bin Killis had formed a private force, commander of which was called ’Qaid’. Courts were established for different jobs. There was also a well equipped dispensary in his palace. In the month of Ramadhan besides judges and prominent persons, nominal and general public also used to take advantage of his favour. His annual income was 100,000 dinars, i.e. more than 50.000 guineas. At the time of his death he left property valued forty lakh dinars, this amount was exclusive 200,000 dinars kept aside by him for the dowry of his daughter. He also left a piece of land worth 300.000 dinars.

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(20) Muhammad Daniel

knowing Judaism leads to Islam

A salaam alekum,

The point that a Jew who truly knows his religion will see the truth of Islam is a good one. Indeed, it was my studies of Judaism that brought me to Islam!

Having been brought up in a 'reform' Jewish family I rejected Judaism at an early age, hating the exclusivity and hypocrisy. I always believed in God, however, and at the age of 17 began searching for the way to worship Him. I traveled a lot, I spent time in Palestine during the first Intifada working on a moshav (farm) near Gaza for harsh Israeli bosses who treated me like s**t with Palestinians who treated me like a brother - all of whom knew I was a jew - my eyes were opened to the truth about Zionism and the seed of Islam was planted in my heart.

But it was not until 10 years later when, having gone through phases of Bhuddism, Taoism etc I decided to study Judaism - the religion I was born into. The tradition of prophethood made perfect sense to me but why, I asked myself, did Jews not accept the prophethood of Jesus? I saw no discord in the essence of his message, merely a widening of it to all before it was corrupted. And thus to Muhammad. I was not interested in race or origin, just truth; so I decided to study this Qur'an to see if it was the pure revelation Muslims claimed it to be.

As I started to read my heart broke. Here was the Lord of Mankind making specific calls to the Children of Israel, reminding them of His favours, calling them back to Him despite all they had done, offering a chance for forgiveness, for reconciliation. And this offer was an eternal one! Always open, even now with everything that is going on. Truly the name Al Rahman is fitting.

I am not ashamed to say I cried as I read; like a child being called back to his mother after a long, long period of separation. And still I sometimes feel that anxiety that is so common in all non-muslims, especially Jews, but then I pray or do Zikr and am comforted. For is not Islam the ultimate, the

only security? Did not the Prophet, may Allah's blessings be upon him, say that the prayer is pure solace?

I pray for all non-muslims to come to this deen but I am puzzled for the most part by 'my' people - the Jews. I have never really spent much time with them, apart from my immediate family. Maybe some of you can enlighten me - do they read the Qur'an and yet refuse to heed the call of God to them so specifically? Why? Are their hearts really so hard? Or may be they are scared, as I believe some of my family are. What do you think is the best method of dawah...

Eid Mubarak and may Allah guide us all.

Muhammad Daniel.